

Dodson "Village": A Flint Ridge Habitation Site

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Introduction

In a survey of Middle Woodland sites in Licking County, Ohio, Bernhardt (1976) has reviewed the little that is known regarding the Dodson "village" site, a small site that was excavated on Flint Ridge by John and Paul Loughman in the spring of 1932. Bernhardt considers the site to represent brief, intermittent occupation related to procurement of Flint Ridge (Vanport) flint and fits the site rather neatly into a settlement/subsistence model essentially identical with that of Struever and Houart's (1972) Hopewell Interaction Sphere.

Although essentially in agreement with Bernhardt's interpretation of the nature of the Dodson Site itself, we think that his application of the Hopewellian Interaction Sphere construct is a bit too elegant. Quite possibly flint from the Dodson Site did eventually find its way in Middle or Late Woodland times to Illinois, and some may also have travelled to New York, New Jersey, or the Delmarva Peninsula in Early Woodland times. We would emphasize that the Dodson Site was probably multi-component, and rather than elaborate upon an Adena "kula-like" Interaction Sphere, we will here simply provide a closer description and analysis of the available Dodson Site material.

Site Location

Bernhardt (1976:44) criticizes the Loughmans, as well as W.C. Mills, for being so vague in describing site locations that their descriptions "are so general as to be of little value in attempting to rediscover the sites in question." Of course, fifty and sixty years ago every collector who visited "the Ridge" knew the location of Clark's blacksmith shop, as well as the Loughman, Dodson, and Graham farms. Deed records at the Licking County Probate Court (Vol. 273, p. 487) clearly locate the Charles C. Dodson farm, a 70 acre tract in Lot 9, Hopewell Twp., purchased from Thomas B. Iden, and immediately adjoining the J. R. Graham farm, 90 acres in the eastern half of Lot 9, approximately one mile south of the Flint Ridge Museum at "the Crossroads." Inability to locate the Dodson Site more precisely is due less to the inadequacy of the Loughman description than to the fact that the site is on private property.

The Dodson Site is believed to be identical with the Graham Site, described by Mills (1921:219) as a workshop—"practically the only place on the 'Ridge' showing a continual habitation.

Broken pottery, animal bones of many kinds, and other general indications show a more or less permanent habitation."

Excavation History

On April 19, 1932, A. T. Wehrle, of Newark, Ohio, purchased of Charles Dodson "the right and privilege of excavating for and removing any and all Indian Relics, etc., found on the small tract 175 feet by 300 feet as now stated, said tract being known as the Indian Village site." The purchase price was \$75.00. John and Paul Loughman worked a total of 133 and 125 hours, respectively, in excavating the site from April 19 through May 3, 1932, John Loughman receiving 40¢ an hour, Paul Loughman 20¢, for a total of \$53.20 and \$25.00, respectively. The Loughman's brief report to Wehrle is quoted in its entirety below. The original, as well as a copy of Wehrle's agreement with Dodson and his financial accounts with the Loughmans, is in the Licking County file at the Department of Archaeology, Ohio Historical Society.

"Started exploring the Dodson village site April 19, 1932, which is located on Flint Ridge, two miles and a half north of Brownsville, in Hopewell Township, Licking Co., State of Ohio. This village site covered proxmantly [sic] one acre and a half of ground.

"This village site was only a temperray [sic] village site. As we found no proof that this had been a permennent [sic] site. It looked as though it had been used as a summer camp.

"Probley [sic] the Indians came to the ridge during the summer mounths quarried their flint for arrowheads, spears, and other flint objects, which they chipped out on this site. As there were thousands of Flint chips, of the best Flint Ridge material. The average depth of this village site was nine inches. In exploring this village site we found bones of the deer, wild turkey, and gray wolf, also broken pottery of several different desyns, we also found cores, leaf shaped spears, and arrow heads. We also found two fire pots. No. 1 fire pot contained one bone awl, broken pottery, bone of deer and wild turkey, six feet south of B.5, fifty two feet east of C.5. Depth two feet seven inches, diameter three and one half feet. Fire Pot No. 2 contained only broken pieces of pottery. Twenty Five feet south of B.5. Fifty nine feet west of A.6. Depth two feet. Diameter three feet. We found fragraments [sic] of mica, also one bone

bead, one small bone awl, and a[n] unfinished knife handle, from the large part of the deer antler.

"This village site has been known for years as one of the greatest core fields in the state. As there have been thousands of cores picked up on this village site. The core which is the heart of the flint, which was used to chip flake knives from, which they prob[ab]ly used for working wood and bone.

"We finished our work on May 3rd, 1932."

Ohio Historical Society Collection

Except for the fragments of mica, all of the material excavated by the Loughman brothers at the Dodson Site appears to be in the Ohio Historical Society's collections, where we have examined the material through the courtesy of Martha Potter Otto and with the aid of Brad Baker. Unfortunately, individual items cannot be related to either of the Loughman's "fire pots" and it cannot be ascertained that all of their lithic material was actually excavated, as some of it may have been surface collected at the site.

Of the ceramics in the Loughman collection, eleven sherds are believed to represent three separate vessels assigned to Adena Plain. These include the rim sherd and flat-bottomed basal sherd illustrated in Figure 1. Thickness of the basal sherds ranges from 6.3 to 6.8 mm. The rim sherd and four body sherds are very smooth, almost burnished, 6.1 to 7.4 mm thick. Four sherds assigned to a third Adena Plain vessel vary from 8.0 to 10.8 mm thick. All three vessels have a fine to coarse granitic temper. Six additional plain body sherds from 6.0 to 7.6 mm thick (mean, 6.8 mm) with crushed igneous rock temper could be Early, Middle, or Late Woodland plain ware.

Three cordmarked, limestone-tempered (leached) body sherds 6.2 to 8.6 mm thick and a rim sherd with flat lip represent a Late Woodland (Watson/Chesser/Peters) vessel (Figure 2, center).

More finely tempered (crushed igneous rock) body sherds may represent at least two distinct vessels of Late Woodland or Late Prehistoric ware. In one assortment of sherds, thickness ranges from 3.9 to 8.6 mm, with mean of 6.0 mm, approximately one-third of the sherds having the cordmarking smoothed, though one sherd does exhibit an S-twist in the cordmarking. A single rim sherd (Figure 2, left) 4.9 mm thick displays

vertical smoothed-over cordmarking. The neck sherd illustrated in Figure 2 (right), 7.2-9.3 mm thick, along with three body sherds 5.2-7.4 mm thick, represents another Late Woodland or Late Prehistoric vessel, clearly with cordmarked body and a smoothed neck area.

The most unusual sherd is the incised rim shown in Figure 3. Thin, 4.1-5.6 mm thick, with a flat, incised lip and crude, scallop-like incised rim motif, this grit-tempered sherd might be Middle Woodland in age, though it could be even Late Prehistoric. The decoration bears a crude resemblance to that of *cazuela* bowls recovered from the Lenoir No. 2 and Citico Mounds in Tennessee (Griffin 1943: pl. 129, 131), though no direct relationship is likely.

A variety of chipped flint bifaces are available from the Loughman excavations at the Dodson Site. Triangular blades are shown in Figures 4 and 5. All of these are of Flint Ridge flint and display a considerable range in both length/width ratio and basal configuration. Even more variable are the modified blades shown in Figures 6 and 7. Most of these are of Flint Ridge flint, though a few, including the Archaic point in the upper left of Figure 6, are of Upper Mercer flint. At least one typical Adena Stemmed blade (middle of upper row, Figure 6) was recovered. The majority of the notched blades represent Middle or Late Woodland forms, but, surprisingly, only one Hopewellian flake knife occurs (lower right, Figure 7).

In May, 1927, Dodson Village was explored by one of the Loughmans, Robert Goslin, and Emerson Greenman. The site was again visited by Greenman in 1929. Included in this material are several hammerstones, two late Adena blades, an Archaic bevel, and a St. Albans point, as well as numerous Hopewellian cores. It is presumed that this material was surface collected. There is also a large collection at the Ohio Historical Society simply labelled "Flint

Ridge, Licking Co., O., explored by OSM, 1919, 1929, 1937," but none of this can be identified as having come from the Dodson Site proper.

The only other stone artifacts definitely a part of the Loughman collection from the Dodson Site are the flat, round river pebble and rectangular bar of siderite (clay ironstone) shown in Figure 8. Function of these two objects is speculative at best.

Faunal remains are also sparse, though it remains problematic whether all of the excavated material is still extant. There are three antler tine fragments, as well as the large antler "handle" (more likely a flint knapping tool), the proximal end of a deer metacarpal (right), fragments of the right and left scapula of a deer, a deer phalanx (III), and a deer bone splinter awl. A dog mandible (right) probably represents the Loughman's "gray wolf" and there are also three loose canine teeth from dogs, as well as a fragment of a raccoon maxilla, a turkey radius awl, a fragment of box turtle shell, and 21 fragments of unidentifiable mammal bone. One shell bead and one bone bead (Figure 9) complete the list of artifacts.

If the Loughmans excavated all of the site (175 by 300 feet) and assuming that this is all of the faunal material recovered, which is entirely possible, then the Dodson occupation must have been very ephemeral indeed.

Conclusions

It is believed that the Dodson "village site" represents very short term occupation over a long period of time by comparatively small groups of people intent upon procuring Flint Ridge flint. The most intensive (or most frequent) use of the site appears to have been during Early, Middle, and Late Woodland times, and comparison may be made with the late Adena Buckmeyer Site in northeastern Perry County, a few miles south of the Ridge (Bush 1975). Aside

from the large amount of workshop material associated with quarrying and preliminary preparation of Flint Ridge flint, the Dodson Site cannot be described as a "rich site" (Bernhardt 1976:44). It seems likely that the "fire pots" excavated by John and Paul Loughman were Early and Middle/Late Woodland features associated with flint procurement activities, probably during the summer, though the faunal assemblage is too meagre to be definitive on this score. That they were directly associated with a discrete yet far-flung trading network such as that envisioned in Struiver and Houart's Hopewellian Interaction Sphere remains more dubious.

References

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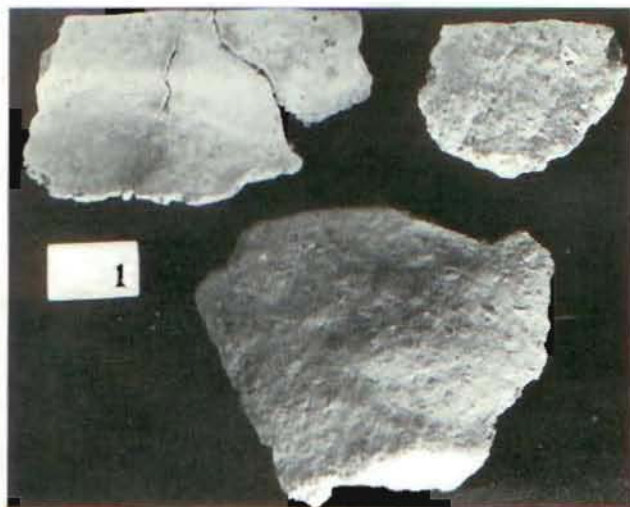


Fig. 1 (Murphy-Morton) Adena Plain ceramics from the Dodson Site. Bar scale equals one inch.



Fig. 2 (Murphy-Morton) Grit- and limestone-tempered rimsherds and grit-tempered, cordmarked neck sherd, Dodson Site.



Fig. 3 (Murphy—Morton) Unusual incised grit-tempered rim sherd.



Fig. 4 (Murphy—Morton) Triangular biface blades.



Fig. 5 (Murphy—Morton) Triangular biface blades.



Fig 6. (Murphy—Morton) Modified bifacial blades, including Archaic, Adena, and Middle/Late Woodland blades.



Fig. 7 (Murphy—Morton) Middle and Late Woodland notched bifaces and Middle Woodland bladelet.



Fig. 8 (Murphy—Morton) Antler flint-working tool and stone artifacts from Dodson Site features.

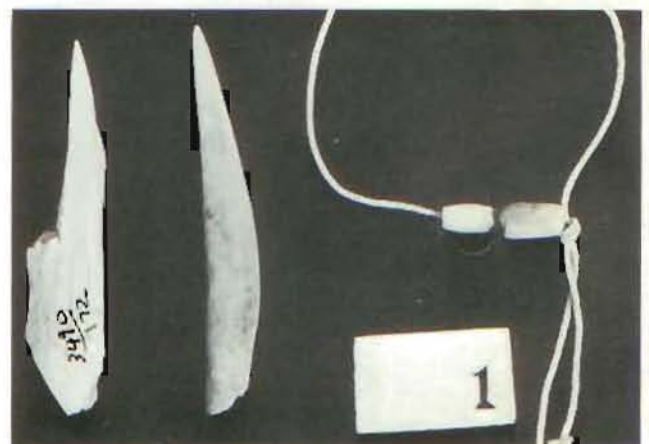


Fig. 9 (Murphy—Morton) Bone awls, shell and bone beads from Dodson Site features.